

Authors and Poets of Holland and its former colonies

"Cross the Seas" with their art



Olga reads accompanied by Alydia Wever. Ton van de Langkruis and Jessica van de Linden.



Belén Kock-Marchena with Deborah Jack, l. to r.

Sunday evening Historical Fort Zoutman was the setting for the "Crusa Laman" or "Crossing the Seas" Literature Festival of 2005. Hosted by Jessica van de Linden, a teacher at the Instituto Pedagógico Arubano, it was a night of tears and laughter as the audience was enthralled by the poetry and prose of authors from Holland, its overseas territories and all its former colonies. Representing Aruba were poet Belén Kock-Marchena and Olga Zaandam-Buckley, who did a reading of her short story "Landscaping" an indictment of "modern progress" while the natural beauty of Aruba's indigenous flora is ignored and destroyed. Along with Putu Wijaya of Indonesia, Drisana Deborah Jack of St. Maarten, Diana Ferrus of South Africa, Clark Accord of Surinam, Myra Römer of Curaçao, and Gerrit Komrij of Holland, they presented a

night of comedy and drama representing the diverse cultural influences of their homelands.

Putu Wijaya, author and playwright, was born in Bali and works with the Mandiri Theater Company of Indonesia. He invited the audience to choose the material, whether they wanted a funny story, or a sad story, and they chose funny, which dealt with a man demanding an organ transplant of an unmentionable part of the human body. His presentation of his story, "Lonely," replete with dramatic tears and laughter, was thoroughly entertaining.

Drisana Deborah Jack of St. Maarten, asked why she is categorized as a "Caribbean Artist" stated that she based her art not on geography but her history and culture, and her poem, "a Spanish rhythm blows my mind at 140 mph" was inspired by her island being devastated by Hurri-

cane Luis, thus exemplifying the Caribbean experience.



Diana Ferrus.

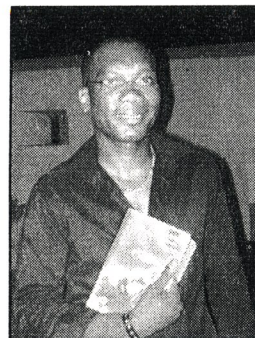
Diana Ferrus of South Africa has been writing since she was a young girl under Apartheid, but was forced to hide her thoughts and creativity under an oppressive government. Only since the end of Apartheid has she been recognized for her work, ranging from a castigation of the intellectual and spiritual desert forced upon her people in the poem "The Dry Days of my Childhood" to the tragic plight of "A Tribute to Sarah Bartmann." Sarah Bartmann was known as the "Hottentot's Venus," an indigenous woman taken from the Cape to Europe by her Dutch employer and put on display by an animal trainer to show off her distinct anatomy. She did not share in the profits as she was promised, and died heartbroken, in exile, far from her motherland and tribe. After a plaster cast was made of her body, it was dissected and her organs were still on display in Musée de l'Homme, Paris, until 1974. Diana's poem, written while at University in Holland, was instrumental in sparking the movement that finally saw Sarah Bartmann's remains returned to her homeland in 2002.

Belén Kock-Marchena and Olga Zaandam-Buckley presented their Aruban experience in poetry and prose. Belén was accompanied by Johnny Scharbaay on electronic keyboard during her heartfelt readings of her universally touching poems. Her words went right to the heart of the matter, in matters of

Poem by Belén

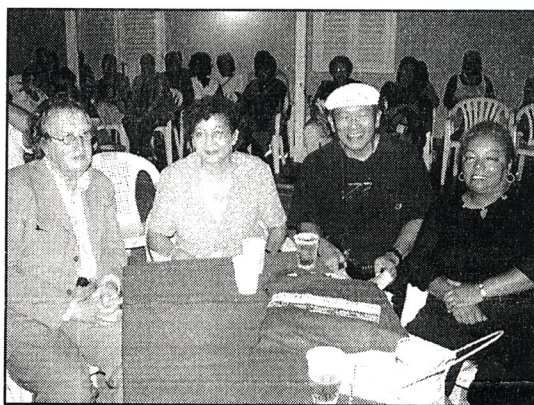
Every little thing
that may caress you,
hold on to it carefully
safely hidden
in the drawer
of your heart.

So that in moments
of dark despair,
you will remember
that not too far away
you have in keepsake
tender memories
to revive you



Clark Accord.

Festival held in The Hague, Holland, that is attended by thousands and lasts for several days. It comes from the tradition of gathering together on frigid winter nights to entertain each other with stories and poems. "Winternachten" Artistic Coordinator Ton van de Langkruis is trav-



Left to right Gerrit Komrij, Myra Römer, Putu Wijaya and Diana Ferrus.

the heart. Subjects ranging from the loss of a mother, loneliness, passion and long-term love, understanding, and tolerance, in phrases that touch our souls, left many of the audience in tears.

Olga Zaandam Buckley's poems were accompanied by the Alydia Wever Dance Troupe. Olga is also the managing director of the Caribbean University of Aruba, and she was honored after her readings with flowers from an appreciative student body, and also the hospital staff of Aruba.

Myra Römer of Curaçao did a reading of her short story "Joaquim Malparaíso," that has a bit of a twist at the end, depicting the steps a woman will take to be free of a husband that is an abusive drunk, destructive and damaging to both his wife and children.

The evening finished with Clark Accord and Gerrit Komrij. Clark shared the experience of Amazon life in his story "The Death of Sasamali" and the decidedly ironic reflections in the poetry of Gerrit was a lively end to the night.

The "Crusa Laman" Festival is an offshoot of the "Winternachten" Literature

elling with the various artists and assisted in the presentations with the projection of translation of subtitles of the various works in English and Papiamentu when needed. From here, the company will travel to Curaçao, where more artists from that island will participate. According to Mr. Langkruis the "concept of the festival is the exchange between artists to enable them to harvest the fruits of their talents and to keep a cultural network going that will continue to inspire them." It was an inspiring evening for all those attending, an expressive window into the various life experiences in these varied cultures, but still with a universal appeal and message to all individuals.